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Advancement of women: implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 65/191, provides a review of the follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session. It focuses on selected intergovernmental processes of the United Nations and assesses the extent to which they integrate a gender perspective in their work. The report concludes with recommendations for further measures to enhance the implementation of gender equality mandates.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report responds to General Assembly resolution 65/191, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to report annually to it on the follow-up to and progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session, with an assessment of progress in gender mainstreaming, including information on key achievements, lessons learned and good practices, and recommendations on further measures to enhance implementation. The report also responds to the request of the Economic and Social Council, in resolution 2006/9, that the Secretary-General include in the report an assessment of the impact of the input of the Commission on the Status of Women to discussions within the United Nations system.

2. The report focuses on selected intergovernmental processes of the United Nations, and assesses the extent to which they integrate a gender perspective.[1] The report is divided into seven sections. Following the introduction, section II discusses the rationale for integrating a gender perspective in intergovernmental work. Section III outlines the methodology used in the report. Section IV presents the findings of the analysis on the extent to which a gender perspective has been reflected in reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions. The section also assesses the extent to which gender perspectives have been mainstreamed in the resolutions adopted by these bodies. Section V examines the attention given to gender equality issues in the preparations for, and when applicable, the outcomes of three high-level intergovernmental events: the 2011 Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and the 2013 review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Section VI specifically addresses the contributions of the Commission on the Status of Women and section VII provides a summary and conclusion of the report and outlines recommendations for further action.

II. Rationale for mainstreaming a gender perspective in intergovernmental processes

3. The General Assembly has repeatedly affirmed the role of the intergovernmental process of the United Nations in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. In its resolution 65/191, the Assembly reaffirmed that gender mainstreaming was a globally accepted strategy for promoting the empowerment of women and achieving gender equality by transforming structures of inequality. It also reaffirmed the commitment to actively promote the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres, as well as the commitment to strengthen the capabilities of the United Nations system in the area of gender equality. In paragraph 15 of the resolution, the

[1] The present report complements the annual report to the Economic and Social Council on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system (E/2011/114), and the annual report to the Commission on the Status of Women focused on actions of Member States for gender mainstreaming at the national level (see E/CN.6/2011/5).

Assembly called upon all bodies of the United Nations to fully mainstream a gender perspective into all issues under their consideration and within their mandates, as well as in all United Nations summits, conferences and special sessions and in their follow-up processes, including the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 2011, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 and the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, at the fifty-first session of the Commission for Social Development, in 2013.

4. Of particular relevance to the focus of the present report is paragraph 18 of resolution 65/191, in which the Assembly requested that reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies systematically address gender perspectives through qualitative gender analysis, sex- and age-disaggregated data and, where available, quantitative data, in particular through concrete conclusions and recommendations for further action on gender equality and the empowerment of women, in order to facilitate gender-sensitive policy development.

5. The United Nations intergovernmental process is complex. Intergovernmental bodies differ in their mandates, and they receive and examine a diverse set of written inputs, including reports of the Secretary-General, Member States, other intergovernmental bodies, special envoys and rapporteurs, among others. Reports vary widely in form, content and coverage. They may integrate submissions from several contributors — typically Member States and United Nations entities — but also intergovernmental, regional, or non-governmental organizations. Reports feed into the discussions of Member States, which may be conducted through general debates, panel discussions and other events. Intergovernmental meetings allow policymakers to exchange information on progress, challenges and good practices, and help to heighten Governments' commitment to empowering women. Intergovernmental work often, but not always, results in outcome documents such as declarations, resolutions and decisions, or in the case of the Security Council, presidential statements. Outcome documents often provide recommendations for action on an issue. These could be policy guidance for Member States and other stakeholders, or additional mandates to continue to examine and analyse a situation, or to convene further meetings or a high-level event on the issues at stake. Inputs, events and outputs of the intergovernmental process all thus present opportunities to mainstream a gender perspective into all issues under the consideration of respective intergovernmental bodies, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 65/191.

III. Methodology of the present report

6. Through a content analysis, the present report reviews a number of inputs, events and outputs of the intergovernmental process for evidence of the incorporation of a gender perspective, as determined by the presence of the words: gender, sex, woman, man, girl, boy, female, male, sexual, reproductive and maternal (including their plural forms). Documents with at least one occurrence of a keyword were considered to have included a gender perspective. False positive results, for instance "man-made disaster", were discounted.

7. While the list of words selected excludes others that could be argued to reflect a gender perspective, the selected words are those most often found in reports and

documents that address gender equality issues. To ensure that the assessment of the inclusion of a gender perspective went beyond the mere mention of these keywords, documents that passed this first filter were analysed in more depth to assess the extent to which a gender perspective was indeed reflected.

8. All reports of the Secretary-General for, and resolutions of, the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly and the 2010 sessions of the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions were examined. The three events cited in General Assembly resolution 65/191 — the 2011 Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and the 2013 review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 — were also examined. Particular attention was paid to the analysis of preparatory documentation, and when applicable, outcomes. Documents available in the United Nations Official Document System as at 15 June 2011 were examined. Resolutions and reports of the Secretary-General were considered even if they belonged to an agenda item or sub-item which focused specifically on gender equality issues. Where documents were submitted to more than one intergovernmental body, each occurrence was counted since the consideration by each intergovernmental body was considered as an additional opportunity for mainstreaming gender equality issues in the intergovernmental process.

IV. Findings

A. Overview

9. Based on the number of resolutions and Secretary-General's reports before the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and functional commissions, there were multiple opportunities for the incorporation of gender perspectives into the work of these intergovernmental bodies. The Assembly alone received and reviewed 244 reports of the Secretary-General and adopted 270 resolutions. The Council at its 2010 session received and reviewed 20 reports of the Secretary-General and adopted 38 resolutions. A partial list of the reports and resolutions of the functional commissions suggests there were at least 38 reports and 38 resolutions.[2] While a number of these opportunities were clearly used, as demonstrated in the findings of the present report, many remained as untapped potential to catalyse the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session by promoting gender mainstreaming in the work of the United Nations system.

1. General Assembly

(a) Resolutions

10. The analysis of resolutions of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly revealed a gender perspective in nearly a third of all resolutions. Table 1 sets out the distribution of resolutions of, and Secretary-General's reports to, the Assembly that include a gender perspective, by Main Committee. The Third Committee, which

[2] The Commission on the Status of Women (owing to its exclusive focus on gender issues) and the United Nations Forum on Forests (which did not have a session in 2010) are excluded.

focuses on social, humanitarian and cultural issues, was the most likely to integrate a gender dimension in its resolutions. The Second Committee, responsible for economic and financial matters, as well as the General Assembly meeting in plenary, also reflected gender perspectives, with over a third of their respective resolutions likely to integrate such a concern. A gender perspective was found in every fifth resolution of the Fourth Committee, which examines special political and decolonization issues.

11. The Fifth Committee, responsible for administrative and budgetary matters, and particularly the First and Sixth Committees, which respectively handle disarmament and international security and legal questions, seldom adopted resolutions that integrated references to gender equality issues. Despite this, it is noteworthy that the First Committee adopted a draft resolution on "Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control", the first it ever adopted on this topic (see General Assembly resolution 65/69).

Table 1
Number and percentage distribution of resolutions of, and Secretary-General's reports to, the General Assembly that include a gender perspective, by Main Committee

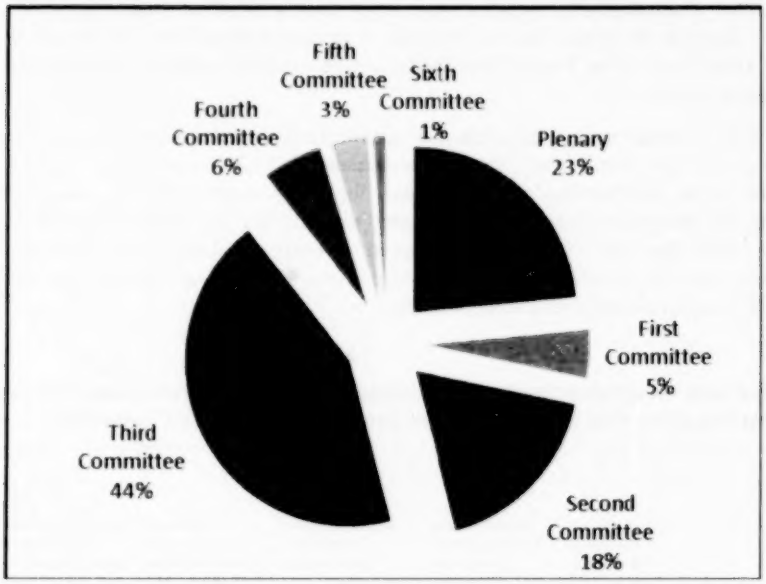
	Number of resolutions	*Number of resolutions that include a gender perspective*	*Proportion of resolutions that include a gender perspective (percentage)*	*Number of reports of the Secretary-General*	*Number of reports of the Secretary-General that include a gender perspective*	*Proportion of reports of the Secretary-General that include a gender perspective (percentage)*
General Assembly	**270**	**85**	**31**	**244**	**146**	**60**
Plenary	55	20	36	46	36	78
First Committee	55	4	7	28	11	39
Second Committee	39	15	38	25	15	60
Third Committee	55	37	67	48	36	75
Fourth Committee	25	5	20	24	13	54
Fifth Committee	24	3	13	87	44	51
Sixth Committee	17	1	6	16	6	38

Note: Out of the 244 reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly, some were considered under more than one agenda item, and some agenda items were allocated to more than one committee. The breakdown by committee thus does not match the total number of Secretary-General's reports submitted to the Assembly.

12. Figure I indicates how all General Assembly resolutions that have a gender perspective are distributed across the Main Committees. Although the Third Committee was responsible for only 20 per cent of all resolutions of the General Assembly, it accounted for nearly half of all resolutions of the Assembly that reflected gender perspectives. The Third Committee thus compensated for the much lower likelihood of other committees (First, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth) to adopt a draft resolution that reflects a gender perspective. The breakdown by committee is consistent with findings from past years and shows that despite repeated calls by the General Assembly for a gender perspective to be mainstreamed into all issues, gender equality issues continue to be little reflected in resolutions dealing with other issues than social and economic matters.

Figure I

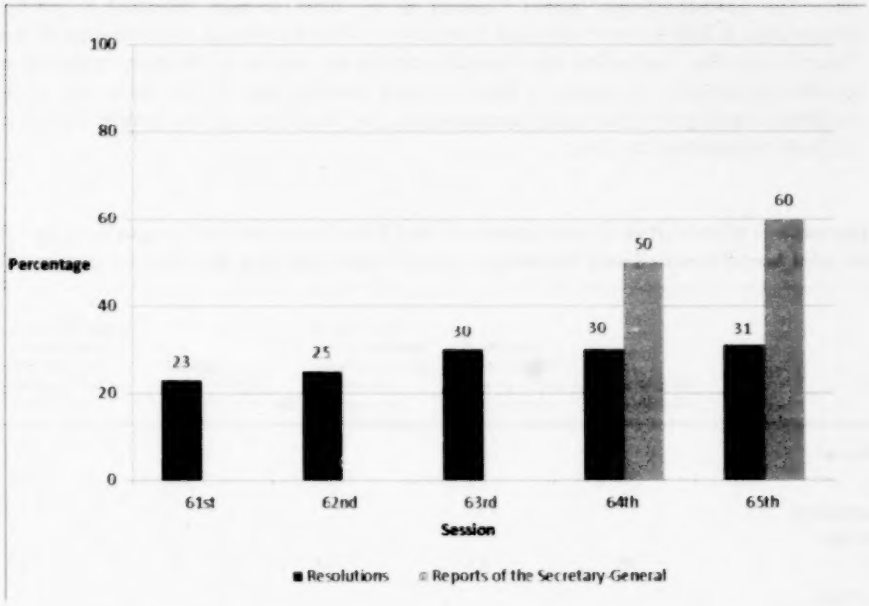
Distribution of all General Assembly resolutions which reflect a gender perspective, by Main Committee in which the resolution was adopted



13. With respect to trends, compared to previous years,[3] there has been little growth in the overall share of General Assembly resolutions that integrate a gender perspective (see figure II). This share has remained fairly low across sessions of the General Assembly, although there is a slight upward trend.

[3] These earlier findings are based on the analysis carried out for previous reports of the Secretary-General: A/62/178, A/63/217, A/64/218 and A/65/204. It must be noted that results up to the sixty-third session of the General Assembly are not fully comparable, as the content analysis relied on a smaller list of words (gender, sex, woman, girl, female and sexual).

Figure II
Trends in percentage of General Assembly documents that include a gender perspective



(b) Reports of the Secretary-General

14. A gender perspective was more likely to be found in reports of the Secretary-General than in resolutions. Sixty per cent of reports included a gender perspective. However, there were variations between the Main Committees that match the variations found for resolutions. Reports submitted to the General Assembly meeting in plenary and to the Second and Third Committees were most likely to include a gender perspective, while reports submitted to the First and Sixth Committees were least likely to do so.

15. With respect to trends, between the sixty-fifth and the sixty-sixth sessions, there was a 10 percentage point increase in the number of reports of the Secretary-General that included a gender perspective (see figure II). The concentration of high-profile events related to gender equality and the empowerment of women which took place in 2010 may account for this. These include the 15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action held during the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council on implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women, the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals and the tenth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. Further, the General Assembly's discussion of proposals on a new gender equality entity and the eventual adoption of resolution 64/289 on 2 July 2010 helped to create a momentum for the inclusion of a gender perspective in the work of intergovernmental bodies.

2. Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions

(a) Resolutions

16. The Economic and Social Council at its 2010 session reflected a gender perspective in half of its resolutions (see table 2). The functional commissions of the Council together, excluding the Commission on the Status of Women, reflected a gender perspective in nearly a third of their resolutions. While there are wide variations among the functional commissions, the small size of the sample makes it difficult to interpret the data.

Table 2
Number and percentage distribution of resolutions of, and Secretary-General's reports to, the 2010 session of the Economic and Social Council and functional commissions that include a gender perspective

	Number of resolutions	*Number of resolutions that include a gender perspective*	*Proportion of resolutions that include a gender perspective (percentage)*	*Number of reports of the Secretary-General*	*Number of reports of the Secretary-General that include a gender perspective*	*Proportion of reports of the Secretary-General that include a gender perspective (percentage)*
Economic and Social Council	**38**	**19**	**50**	**20**	**17**	**85**
Functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council[a]	**38**	**12**	**32**	**38**	**24**	**63**
Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice	13	4	31	6	4	67
Commission on Narcotic Drugs[b]	17	1	6	3	1	33
Commission on Population and Development	1	1	100	4	4	100
Commission on Science and Technology for Development	2	2	100	4	4	100
Commission for Social Development	5	4	80	4	4	100
Commission on Sustainable Development	0	—	—	9	6	67
Statistical Commission	0	—	—	8	1	13

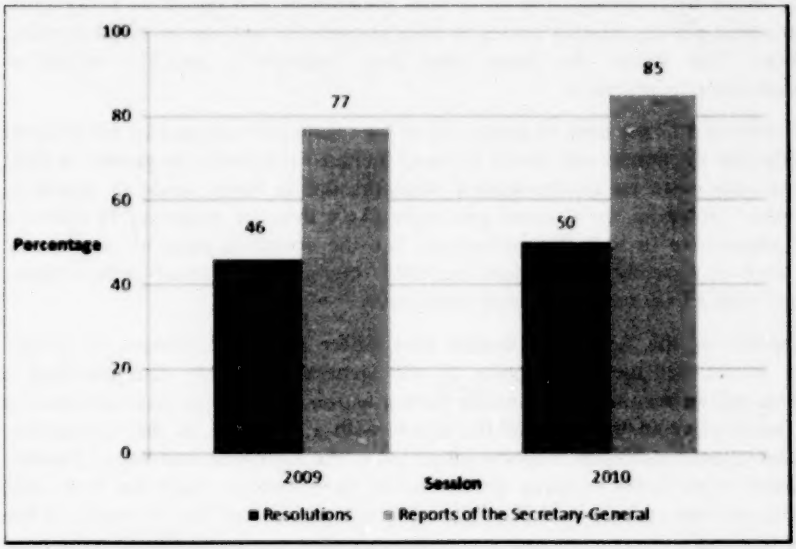
[a] These results do not include the Commission on the Status of Women, owing to its exclusive focus on gender issues, or the United Nations Forum on Forests, which did not have a session in 2010.

[b] The Commission on Narcotics Drugs considers reports of the Secretariat, which were analysed in lieu of reports of the Secretary-General.

17. With respect to trends (see figure III), a comparison of the 2010 with the 2009 session of the Economic and Social Council (see A/65/204) reveals only a 4 per cent increase in the share of resolutions that included a gender perspective. This minimal increase is similar to the trend identified for General Assembly resolutions. A similar comparison could not be carried out for the functional commissions owing to the lack of comparable data for 2009.

Figure III

Percentage of Economic and Social Council documents that include a gender perspective (2009 and 2010 sessions)



(b) Reports of the Secretary-General

18. Similar to findings for the General Assembly, reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions were more likely than resolutions to include a gender perspective. Most (85 per cent) reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the Council, and close to two thirds (63 per cent) of reports to the functional commissions, included a gender perspective.

19. There is a trend towards an increased reflection of a gender perspective in reports of the Secretary-General that were submitted to the Economic and Social Council with an eight percentage point increase over the year. This finding is consistent with the trend identified for reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly. Limited data did not permit an analysis of trends for the functional commissions.

B. In-depth analysis

20. While reports and resolutions may reflect a gender perspective as defined for the present report, they often vary greatly in the level of attention they give to gender equality issues. Focusing on the reports and resolutions that did include a gender perspective, the present section examines the placement of references within documents, and then considers the qualitative strength of the language in those references.

1. Placement

21. The placement of references to gender issues within intergovernmental documents determines their prominence and the likelihood of follow-up actions.

Reports of the Secretary-General draw more attention to gender equality issues when they mention them not only in the body of the report, but also in the conclusion and the recommendations. Resolutions give more emphasis to gender equality issues by referring to them in both preambular and operative paragraphs. By addressing gender equality issues in both preambular and operative paragraphs, resolutions first frame the issue, and then indicate a specific action or recommendation to address it.

22. Twenty and 17 per cent, respectively, of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council included references to gender in their preamble only, with no gender-related recommendation being made in operative paragraphs.[4] However, the Council was more likely than the Assembly to reflect a gender perspective in both the preambular and the operative parts of resolutions: 45 per cent of Assembly resolutions included references to gender in both parts, compared with 61 per cent of Council resolutions.

23. Reports of the Secretary-General also differ in the placement of gender equality issues. Of the 123 reports to the General Assembly that included a conclusion and/or recommendations for further action, only 28 per cent combined a gender perspective in the body of the report with a reference in the conclusions and/or the recommendations. Reports submitted to the Economic and Social Council were much more likely to have gender issues mentioned in both the body and conclusion/recommendations of the report: 64 per cent, or 9 of the 14 reports to the Council that had a conclusion and/or recommendations section, included references in the body and in one or both of these parts.

2. Qualitative assessment

24. Although gender equality issues may be incorporated in key sections of a report or resolution, their impact depends on the strength of the language used in the reference. In an attempt to capture this dimension, intergovernmental documents were reviewed against qualitative variables. Reports of the Secretary-General were assessed qualitatively against two variables: "coverage" of gender equality issues, and the "quality" of the gender discussion. The analysis was carried out on General Assembly documents only, because there was an adequate number to support the analysis.

25. With respect to coverage, reports that included a specific section on gender equality issues as well as several references throughout the rest of the report were considered to have high coverage. A single reference or a few short references were defined as low coverage. Medium coverage fell somewhere in between.

26. The quality analysis of reports characterized cursory references such as "including women" as low quality, while reports that provided precise facts, including sex-disaggregated quantitative data, and/or gender analysis ranged from medium to high quality. For instance, the following excerpt from a report was considered high quality, as it analyses the impact of an event on women and men, taking into account their different circumstances: "It is likely that females represented the greatest share of casualties, as many women were at home when the

[4] The findings on preambular and operative paragraphs pertain to 82 resolutions of the Assembly and 18 resolutions of the Council, as the analysis did not apply to resolutions in which a declaration or an outcome document from a high-level event was adopted or endorsed.

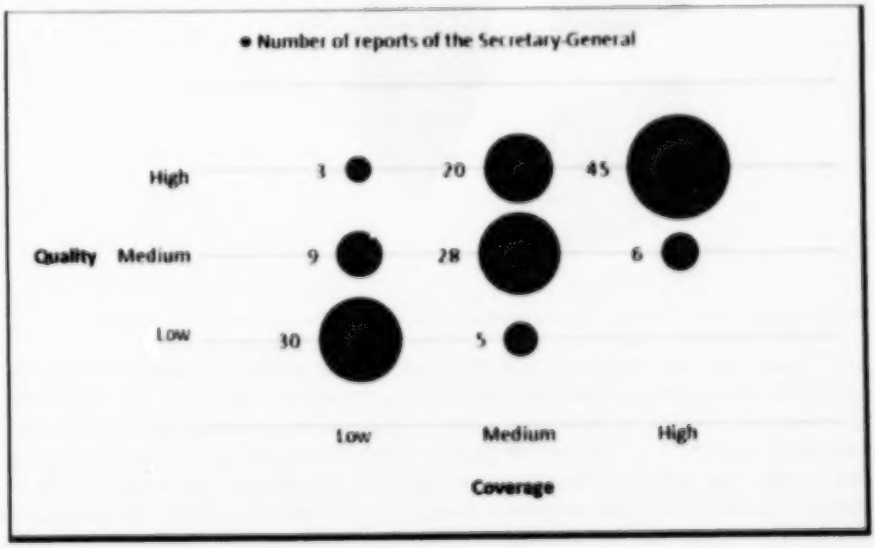
earthquake struck, whereas men were at work and children were on their way home from school" (A/65/335, para. 4). Another example considered to be of high quality is as follows: "Monthly meetings of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General with national leaders of political parties, quarterly meetings with female political party representatives and civil society organizations including women's organizations" (A/65/746, following para. 29).

27. Resolutions, which tend to be shorter than reports, were analysed against one variable only, and categorized as having a low, medium or high focus on gender equality issues. A resolution considered to have a high focus on gender equality issues was identified by the occurrence of a keyword in more than one paragraph and/or with specific language on the situation and needs of women and girls. Resolutions that included a single, superficial reference were considered to reflect a low focus.

(a) Reports of the Secretary-General

28. Figure IV sets out the distribution of reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly across the two variables, coverage and quality. Thirty per cent of reports (45 out of 146) were of both high coverage and quality, while 21 per cent were of both low coverage and quality. While the reports varied widely both in the coverage of gender equality issues and in the characteristics of these inclusions, there tended to be a general correlation between coverage and quality. Overall, reports were more likely than not to have medium or high coverage of gender equality issues; 49 per cent of reports were rated as high/high or medium/high, compared with the 30 per cent of reports considered as low/low or medium/low.

Figure IV
Coverage and quality of gender references in reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, by frequency

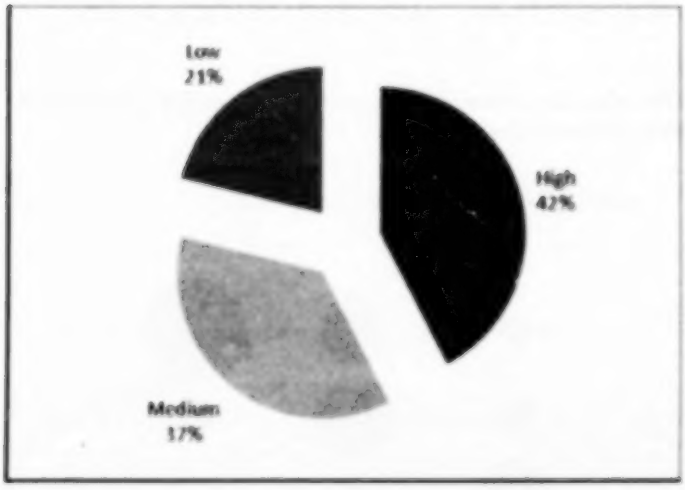


29. Further review showed that about 40 per cent of reports included sex-disaggregated quantitative data. The level of precision of the data provided, however, varied. Some reports provided absolute numbers (for example, the number of female political representatives without specifying the total number of representatives) while others presented relative data (for example, the share of women who benefited from a programme). In some cases, reports drew attention to the fact that quantitative data were not available. For example, the report entitled "Composition of the Secretariat: gratis personnel, retirees and consultants" (A/65/350/Add.1), which provides extensive data disaggregated by sex and other variables, scrupulously indicates when, for which office and for how many persons sex-disaggregated data are missing.

(b) Resolutions

30. While only a third of General Assembly resolutions included a gender perspective, the 85 resolutions that did tended to do so in a fairly clear manner. Nearly 80 per cent of those resolutions integrated a high or medium focus on gender equality issues (see figure V). This means that the keywords indicating a gender perspective were found in more than one paragraph and/or there was specific language on the situation and needs of women and girls.

Figure V
Extent of focus on gender equality issues in General Assembly resolutions that include a gender perspective



31. Many of the medium- and high-focus resolutions included paragraphs expressing recognition of the specific situation of women and girls and containing proposals for actions to take into account their needs. For example, in General Assembly resolution 65/220 on the right to food, the Assembly expressed concern that women and girls are disproportionately affected by hunger, food insecurity and poverty, in part as a result of gender inequality and discrimination, and called for measures to ensure the full and equal realization of the right to food and ensuring that women have equal access to resources, including income, land and water and

their ownership, as well as full and equal access to education, science and technology, to enable them to feed themselves and their families.

32. Notwithstanding the progress made in mainstreaming a gender perspective in reports of the Secretary-General and resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and functional commissions, many reports continue to address development challenges within communities in a gender-neutral way. For example, a large number of references to forms of violence, in particular sexual exploitation and abuse, and trafficking in persons, omitted to specify the sex of the victims and of the perpetrators. Gender-neutral terms such as "persons", "children", or "humanitarian and peacekeeping personnel" were generally used, obliterating sex-related patterns and hiding possible changes over time. Knowing which groups are affected, and in which proportion, is key for intergovernmental bodies to devise appropriate policy responses.

33. Few of the reports and resolutions integrating a gender perspective included references to men and boys. Integrating a gender perspective means assessing the situation and needs of women and men, and girls and boys, as well as the implications of planned action on each of these groups.[5] Ensuring that gender-sensitive analysis not only focuses on women, but also considers issues from a male perspective, can help to broaden support for a gender-based approach.

34. The frequent absence of an age dimension is also worth noting. Resolutions and reports typically referred to women or to children, but rarely had more specific references to ages or age groups; specific reference to girls was often not made. Girls face particular forms of discrimination, and their identification in reports, when applicable, would help to sharpen policy intervention. Similarly documents that referred to youth rarely broke the term down by sex or age, rendering effective policymaking on the issues addressed difficult.

35. While the approach to the qualitative assessments used in the present section undoubtedly has limitations, these findings constitute an important step in understanding progress in incorporating a gender perspective in the work of intergovernmental bodies and the United Nations, as a whole.

V. United Nations high-level intergovernmental events as opportunities for mainstreaming a gender perspective

36. Apart from the resolutions and Secretary-General's reports which are products of the regular sessions of intergovernmental bodies, the United Nations also holds a number of high-level events each year. These events — summits, conferences and special sessions, as well as their follow-up processes — provide important opportunities to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. Their preparation offers many prospects for highlighting gender equality issues, and the events can be occasions for Governments to make visible commitments to women's empowerment, or in the case of follow-up processes, to renew earlier commitments.

37. The present section examines these opportunities in light of the three high-level events cited in General Assembly resolution 65/191: the Fourth United Nations

[5] This understanding is based on the agreed conclusion 1997/2 of the Economic and Social Council on gender mainstreaming.

Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in 2011; the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in 2012; and the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, to be held in 2013.

38. The Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries was an important occasion to raise awareness of the needs of women and girls living in poverty. Held from 9 to 13 May 2011 in Istanbul, the Conference attracted many Heads of State and Government, as well as Members of Parliament, heads of United Nations entities, and senior representatives from non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) addressed the opening session of the Conference, and one of the six high-level interactive thematic debates focused on human and social development, gender equality and empowerment of women.

39. In addition, 5 of 45 special events focused specifically on gender equality issues, in connection to trade, sustainable development, economic empowerment, migrant care workers, and migration and remittances. Among the material available at the Conference was a set of key messages drafted by UN-Women, which provided a gender perspective on the various issues under discussion.

40. The Conference resulted in the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (see A/CONF.219/3/Rev.1), which includes several references to gender equality issues. That outcome document, endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/280, outlines new measures and strategies for the sustainable development of the least developed countries.

41. Importantly, the second section of the outcome document, which reviews the implementation of the previous programme of action, reports on progress made in empowering women, and notes as a lesson learned the relevance of gender and other broad issues to poverty eradication. The third section, entitled "renewed and strengthened partnership for development", lists gender equality among both the objectives of the new programme of action and the principles to implement it. The fourth section sets out eight priority areas for action, five of which integrate references to gender equality issues. Under the "human and social development" priority area, a specific subsection is dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

42. In comparison, the 2001-2010 programme of action, endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/279, incorporated references to gender equality in all of its seven priority areas. It also included references to gender equality issues in subsections discussing trade, climate change and disaster mitigation. In the 2011-2020 programme of action, the priority areas on "trade", "commodities" and "multiple crises and other emerging challenges" make no mention of women. In that respect, the outcome document of the Fourth Conference fell somewhat short, and it could have included a stronger gender perspective.

43. The upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, provide an opportunity for a fuller incorporation of a gender perspective. These two events are still in their preparatory phase: the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development will be held in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and

the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, will take place during the fifty-first session of the Commission for Social Development, in 2013.

44. The level of attention given to gender equality issues in the outcome document of a high-level event depends to a large extent on the inclusion of a gender perspective throughout the preparation of the event. The preparatory process of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries started in 2009 and included a large number of activities to assess the results of the previous programme of action and to devise new measures and strategies for the sustainable development of the least developed countries. However, a review of preparatory documents shows that the gender dimension was not always strongly reflected. In addition, none of the 16 pre-conference thematic events focused exclusively on gender equality issues, and the document summarizing the outcomes of 15 of these events (A/CONF.219/IPC/10) refers to gender equality issues in only two events.

45. United Nations entities play a key role in organizing and coordinating preparatory activities, and as such can use that opportunity to promote the inclusion of a gender perspective in high-level events. In particular, they have the opportunity to influence the process at an early stage, as the preparation for the second global review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, illustrates. In December 2010, the United Nations Population Fund, with the cooperation of the Department for Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the World Health Organization, convened an expert group meeting to elaborate a set of indicators that countries could use in their reporting of progress for the review and appraisal exercise. In this list, nearly all of the indicators that assess the quality of life of older persons call for data disaggregated by sex.[6] This inclusion is significant, as the data provided will influence the subsequent preparatory activities and reports.

46. The participation of civil society groups active in promoting women's rights can also be a decisive element in the inclusion of a gender perspective in preparatory processes and high-level events. The many activities that are typically undertaken at the national, regional and international level to gather inputs and raise awareness ahead of the event provide many avenues for these organizations to make their voices heard and influence the outcome document.

47. Specific efforts to harness the contribution of civil society yield the best results in their level of engagement. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development formally engages nine recognized major groups (see General Assembly resolution 64/236), one of which is women. This has helped to ensure the participation of women's organizations in the preparatory process. For instance, women's organizations were well-represented among major groups at the May 2010 and March 2011 meetings of the Preparatory Committee and delivered numerous interventions. The women's major group also provided a position paper on one of the two themes of the conferences, "a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication". Although the preparation for the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries was guided by three General Assembly resolutions (resolutions 65/171, 64/213 and 63/227) that called for the participation of civil society, women's groups were not specifically mentioned, thus possibly limiting their impact on the outcome document.

[6] See http://social.un.org/index/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=rxM-regd7PM%3d&tabid=1261.

48. The establishment of UN-Women, with its mandate to lead and coordinate the United Nations system work on gender equality can serve as a bridge to ensuring the full incorporation of a gender perspective in high-level intergovernmental processes. UN-Women has been involved in the preparatory process of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and has collaborated with the Steering Committee of the women's major group. In addition, it has planned a number of activities to keep gender equality issues at the forefront of discussions in the preparatory process and at the Conference.

VI. Contribution of the Commission on the Status of Women

49. In paragraph 3 of its resolution 65/191, the General Assembly acknowledged the catalytic role of the Commission on the Status of Women in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women based on the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and in promoting and monitoring gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system. While the Commission on the Status of Women was not included in the content analysis reported in the present report to avoid biasing the results, given the Commission's exclusive focus on gender equality issues, this body holds the primary responsibility for the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and has continued to play a major role in promoting the strategy of gender mainstreaming.

50. At its fifty-fourth session, the Commission commemorated the fifteenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and contributed significantly to the work of the Economic and Social Council. The Commission transmitted summaries of its high-level round table and of three panel discussions to the Council as an input to the annual ministerial review on implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women. The report of the Secretary-General on the review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective towards the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (E/2010/4-E/CN.6/2010/2), originally submitted to the Commission, also served as a basis for the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council. The 2010 ministerial declaration that the Economic and Social Council adopted directly drew on the findings and recommendations of that report. In those respects, the Commission's work undoubtedly influenced the extent to which a gender perspective was incorporated in the work of other bodies and in the United Nations system as a whole, in response to Council resolution 2006/9.

51. UN-Women, which serves as the substantive secretariat to the Commission on the Status of Women, is expected to further strengthen the Commission's capacity to play a catalytic role in promoting gender mainstreaming. In particular, the strengthened country presence of UN-Women should lead to the enrichment of the reports of the Secretary-General to the Commission, as well as the General Assembly, by bringing in the perspectives from the operational work, and thus contributing to bridging the gap between the normative guidance elaborated by the Commission, and implementation work on the ground.

52. The Commission on the Status of Women thus remains a crucial actor whose work can help to increase attention to gender equality issues in high-level events. In the exercise of its role in promoting the strategy of gender mainstreaming, it held an interactive panel discussion on gender equality and sustainable development, during its fifty-fifth session in March 2011, as an input to the preparation of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. It also adopted at that session its first-ever resolution on mainstreaming gender equality and promoting empowerment of women in climate change policies and strategies (see E/2011/27, resolution 55/1), which can serve as a basis for further work on the topic.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

53. The intergovernmental work of the United Nations continues to provide multiple opportunities for mainstreaming a gender perspective into the work of the Organization and that of Member States. The analysis contained in the present report suggests that there has been some progress in incorporating a gender perspective in these intergovernmental processes. There has been particular progress in ensuring that reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly and to the Economic and Social Council reflect a gender perspective. With respect to resolutions, progress has been more limited. High-level events continue to offer good opportunities for incorporating a gender perspective in intergovernmental processes and for reflecting them in major outcome documents. In addition, the in-depth review of intergovernmental documents conducted as part of the analysis for the report suggests that in the majority of cases, the inclusion of a gender perspective, as defined by the mention of the keywords, reflects a genuine focus on gender equality issues.

54. Despite these positive steps, intergovernmental processes have not been optimally used to mainstream a gender perspective into all issues under the consideration of intergovernmental bodies and within their mandates. The share of resolutions of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council that include a gender perspective remains low, and even high-level events which entail longer advance planning and discussion, thus providing more opportunities to include a gender perspective, do not always give sufficient attention to gender equality issues. References to gender equality and the empowerment of women issues continue to be most strongly evidenced in the intergovernmental processes focusing on social and economic issues. Within the General Assembly, therefore, a gender perspective continues to be most likely to be found in the processes of the Second and Third Committees.

55. **In light of the progress and the constraints noted in the present report, and taking into account the critical role of intergovernmental bodies in promoting and monitoring progress in the achievement of global commitments on gender equality, the General Assembly may wish to:**

(a) **Reiterate its call to all intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations to fully mainstream a gender perspective into all issues under their consideration and within their mandates, as well as in all United Nations summits, conferences and special sessions and in their follow-up processes; and call on them to systematically ask for the inclusion of a gender perspective**

when requesting reports of the Secretary-General and other inputs to the intergovernmental process;

(b) Request the Secretary-General to ensure that his reports to intergovernmental bodies systematically include a gender perspective through gender analysis and the provision of sex- and age-disaggregated quantitative data, in particular through concrete conclusions and recommendations for further action on gender equality and the empowerment of women, and in this regard to convey the importance of reflecting a gender perspective to all contributors who provide inputs to his reports;

(c) Encourage Governments to improve the collection, analysis and dissemination of data disaggregated by sex, and age; enhance capacity-development in this regard; and develop relevant gender-sensitive indicators to support policymaking;

(d) Emphasize the important role and contribution of civil society, in particular non-governmental organizations and women's organizations, in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session;

(e) Call upon Governments and the United Nations system to encourage and support the participation of women's groups and non-governmental organizations specialized in gender equality issues in intergovernmental processes through increased outreach, funding and capacity-development.